VI. INTERSTATES AND URBAN RENEWAL

On the basis that the West End was no longer a viable residential neighborhood, the city’s 1948 Metropolitan Master Plan envisioned a new limited access highway, the Millcreek Expressway (Interstate 75), cutting through it and connected industrial development a more appropriate use for the area based on its proximity to downtown and river, rail and highway access.

Thus in the early 1950s, city planners began to conceive a plan for a large modern industrial park in the West End. Their goal was to replace the old factories and tenements with 13 industrial “superblocks” and a limited amount of housing. The initial target area was the Kenyon-Barr district just south of what is now Ezzard Charles Boulevard between the rail yards and Central Avenue. Named for its defining streets, it was later given a new image with the name Queensgate.

In 1956, the Federal Highway Act made it possible for the city to buy and clear land for the Mill Creek Expressway (I-75). The highway was to divide the West End, with industrial on the west side and residential areas on the east. A $9 million bond for urban development was approved by voters and the comprehensive clearance of the West End began.

Queensgate I

The Queensgate project was undertaken in phases over roughly four decades. Queensgate I resulted in an un distinguished but successful industrial park, which includes service industries, light manufacturing, transportation facilities and warehouses as well as offices, hotels and restaurants. I-75 and Queensgate I together made up the nation’s second largest slum clearance up to that time. Nearly 3,700 buildings on 450 acres were razed. Ninety-eight hundred families, 27,000 people—97% of whom were black—were displaced.

The Queensgate I area generally was successful as a commercial/industrial park with relatively few vacant or deteriorated buildings. But in other parts of the neighborhood, many structures, particularly houses and small stores, stood empty and crumbling years after they had been scheduled for rehabilitation.

Park Town and Richmond Village

In 1962 two private housing projects, Park Town and Richmond Village, opened with approximately 550 units to house 2,000 people. Park Town was a cooperative where residents needed down payments of $250 to $650 to move in, and Richmond Village was a private apartment complex that rented units at market price. In contrast to the federally-subsidized Laurel Homes and Lincoln Court, Park Town and Richmond Village were not fully tenanted for several years, but now they are still viable while the former are gone.

Dayton Street Historic District

In 1964, three blocks of notable nineteenth-century houses along Dayton Street were declared a local historic district in order to protect them from demolition. The Miami Purchase Preservation Fund bought a number of these dwellings, rehabilitating some and selling others to those who wished to do the same.